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# MY GARDEN OF VERSE

BY  
GRETCHEN LEWIS COURTNEY

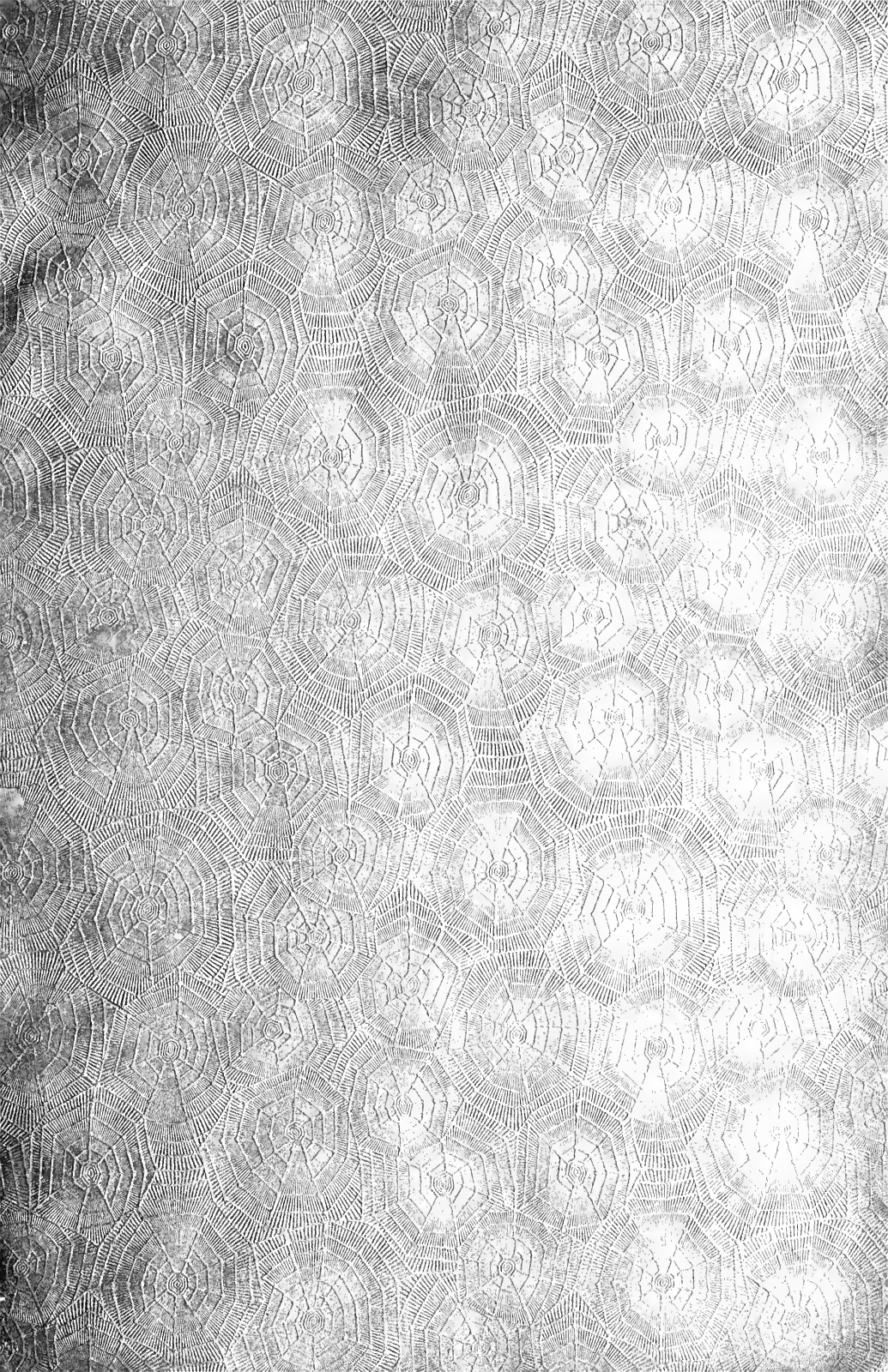


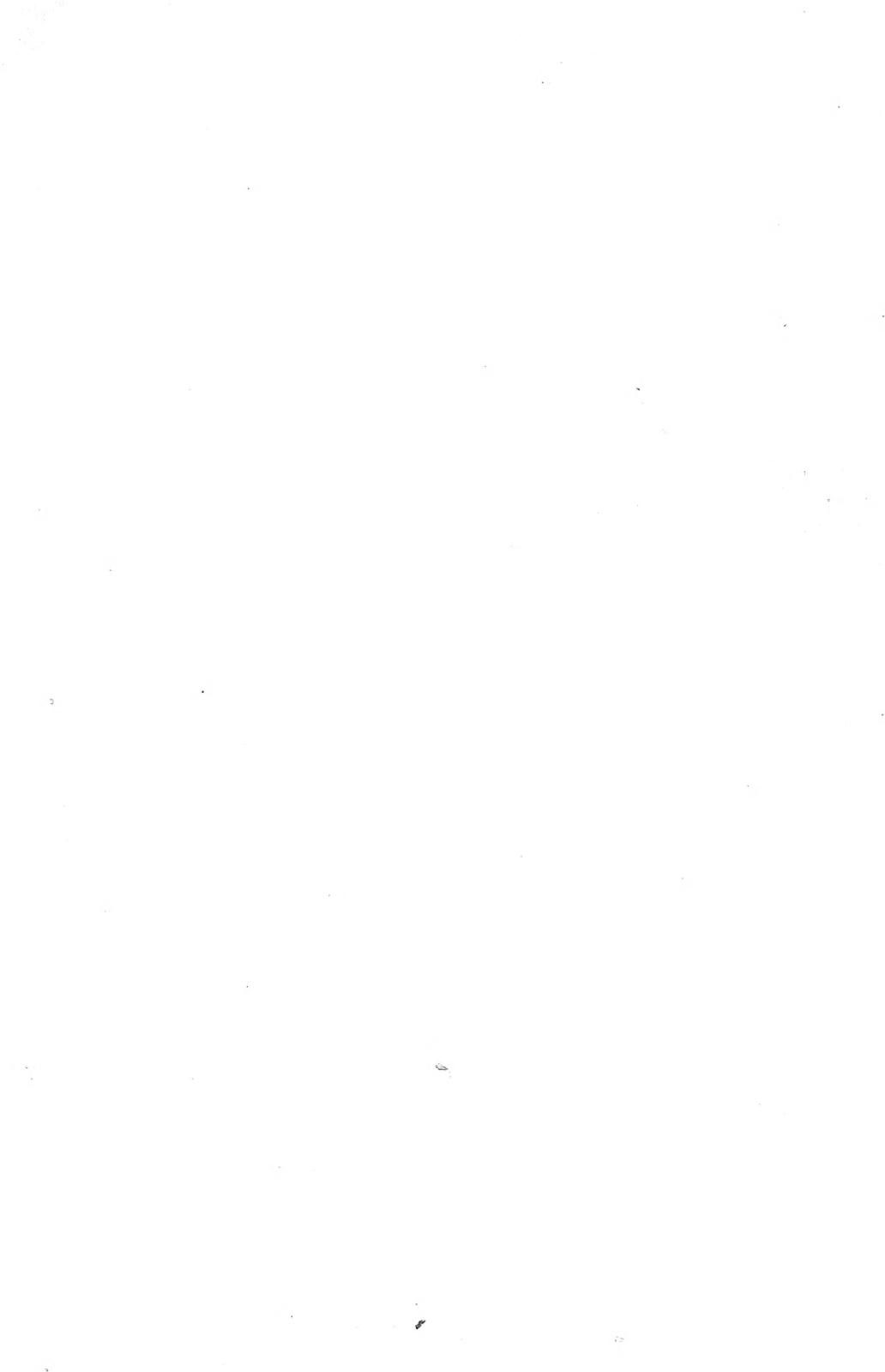
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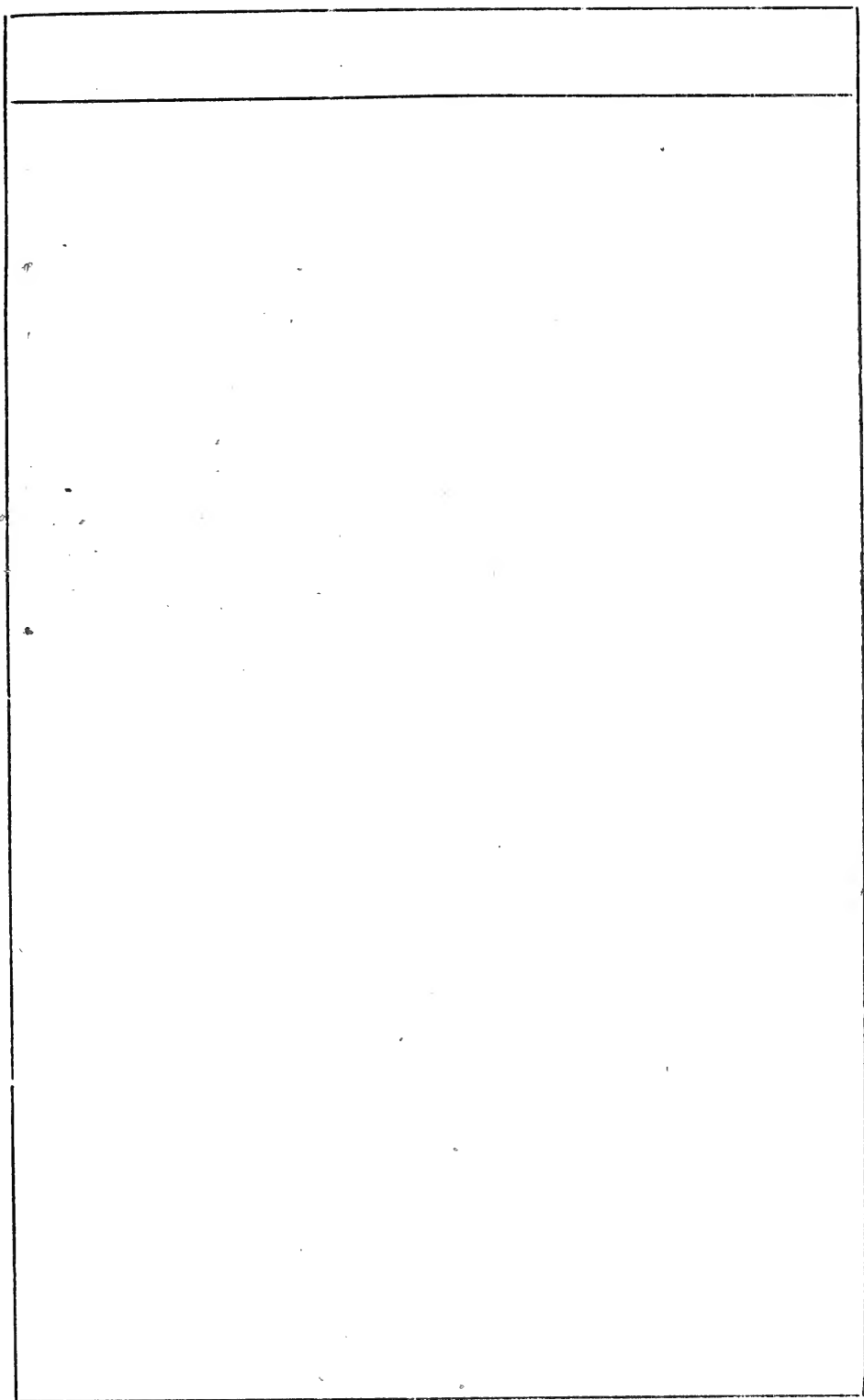
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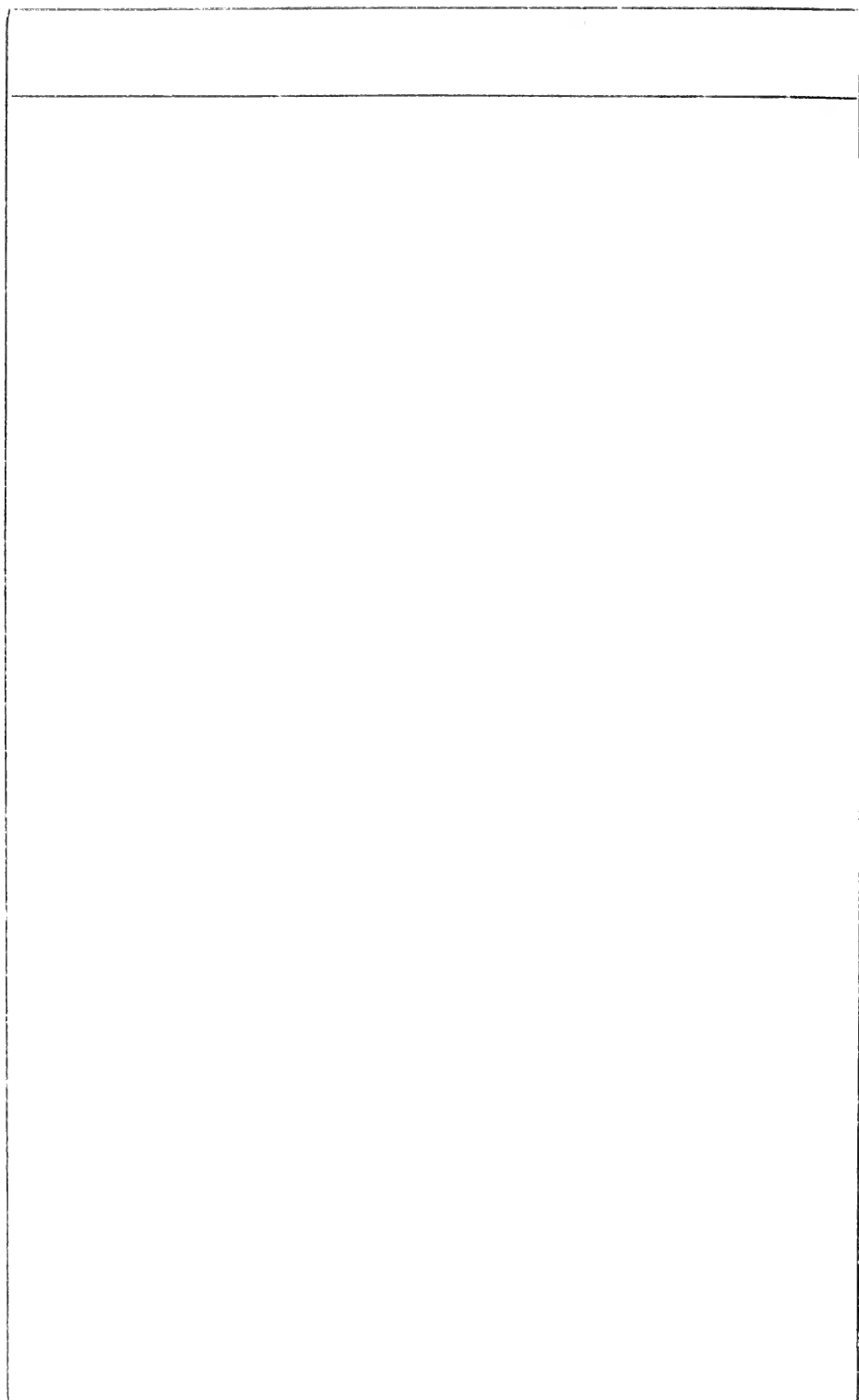
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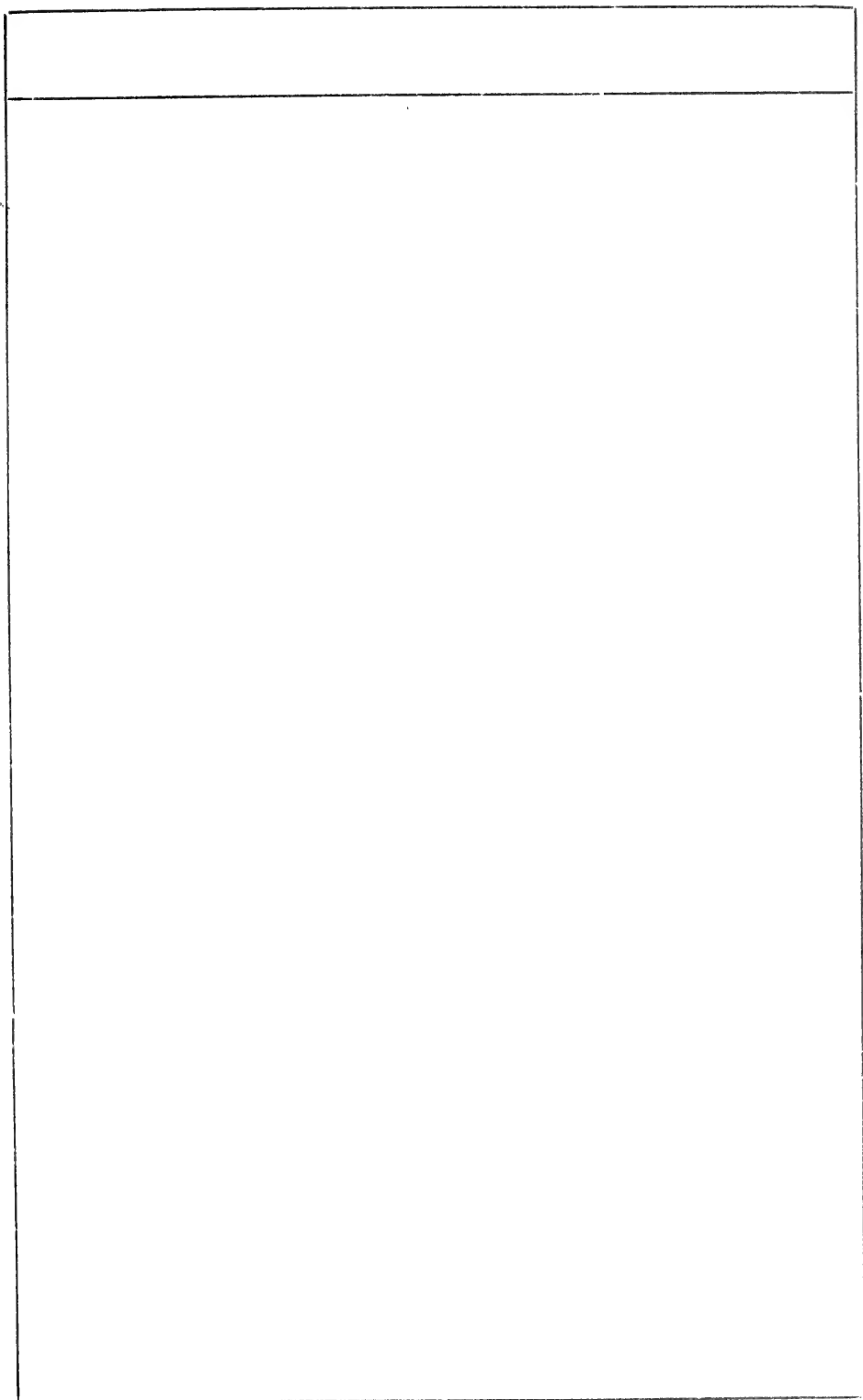


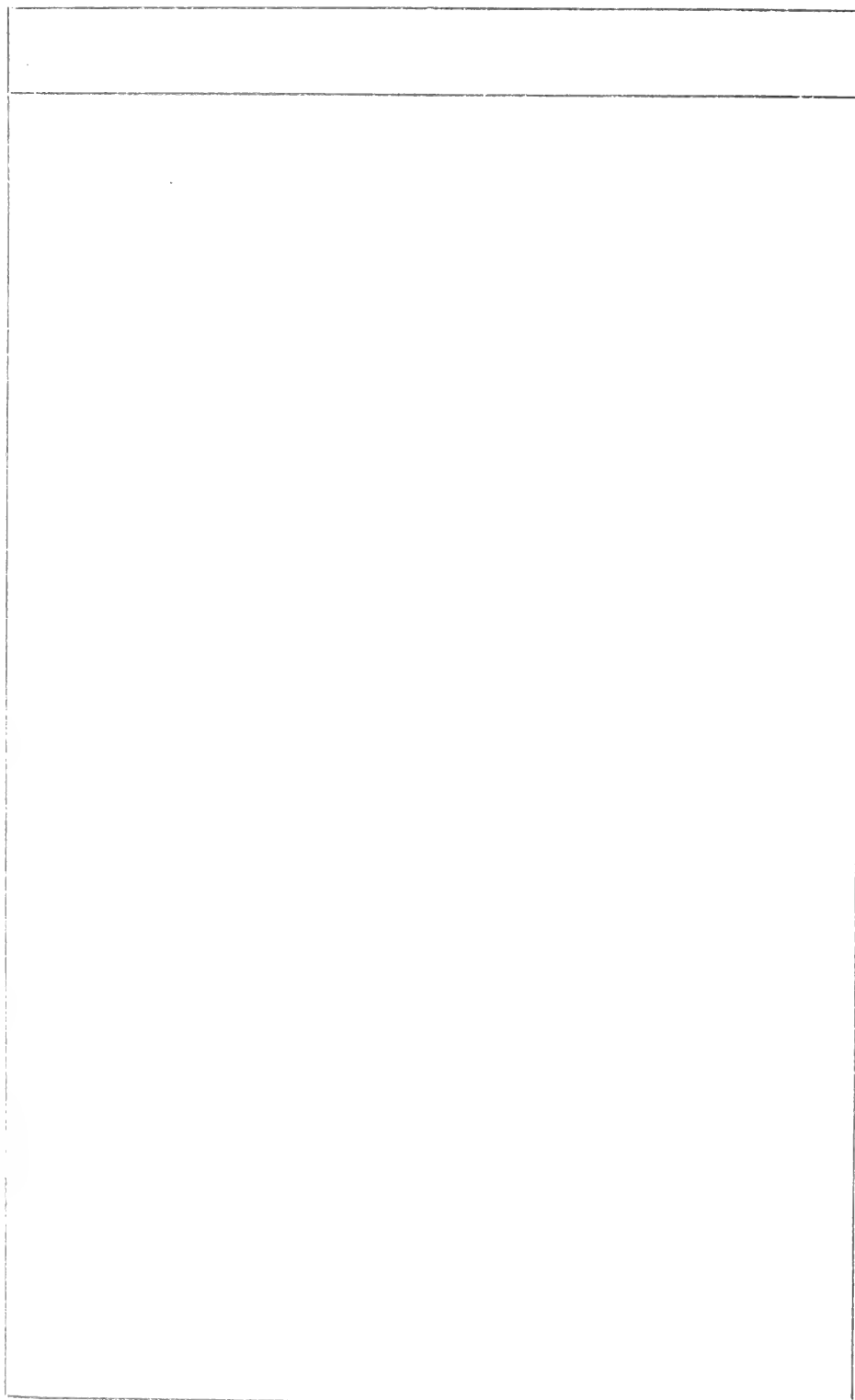
















# MY GARDEN OF VERSE

By  
GRETCHEN LEWIS COURTNEY

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RICHMOND, VA.

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by  
Gretchen Lewis Courtney



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## SONGS THE SPIRIT SINGS

*Songs the Spirit Sings—echoes of light—  
What ecstasy rings in their genius and might;  
Borne out of the ether, cradled in thought;  
In silence they enter the soul and are wrought.*

To a lass whose faith in a  
slender talent was my  
spur, and to a knight  
whose service of love with  
skilful hands made this  
little volume possible.



MY GARDEN  
OF VERSE

## MY GARDEN

Out in the cool of my garden silence  
My thoughts, unleashed, leap up and on.  
No jarring note nor mortal nearness  
To consciously direct their course.  
From subterranean depths of memory  
Spontaneously a golden stream  
Winds in and out of flowers and grasses,  
Paints pictures that the sky reflects,  
Leaves jewels in the tangled masses,  
Etches trees with leaves of lace,  
Floods the soul with inspiration  
Found in solitude sublime—  
A nature's Trinity unsullied  
Combined in God and love and mind.

---

1922

## BEAUTIFUL THOUGHTS

*Dedicated to Woodrow Wilson*

Beautiful thoughts from the minds of men  
Speed straight to God and He blesses them  
Ere they come like the sun and the fragrant rain  
To warm and refresh us again and again.  
Such thoughts are flowers, and their costly seed  
Are nurtured in hearts that ache and bleed  
With the woes of the world and the sorrows of life,  
With the burdens of others, the stress and the strife;  
Till out of it all bursts the soul that lives,  
Strengthens and grows, blossoms and gives;  
Till the stalk bends down and sleeps 'neath the sod  
To awaken at last in the image of God.

---

1922

AS A MAN THINKETH

"Touch not mine anointed,"  
 But thine own cup cleanse,  
 And deep within its shining lens  
 Thou soon shalt see reflected there  
 Thy Brother's soul with beauty rare.  
 Do we crush the rose because of the thorn?  
 Or rail at the night that follows the morn?  
 Love lifts the heart and faith the soul;  
 Doubt chokes the will, the way, the goal.  
 Pluck out the beam that makes thee blind  
 If thou wouldst help another find  
 The tiny mote that floats away  
 When perfect love shines as the day.

—  
1922

TO AN OLD WEDDING RING

Oh, little treasured circlet,  
 What memories you hold  
 Of love and faith and constancy  
 Within your virgin gold.

A talisman so precious,  
 So fragile, old and rare;  
 The glory of your beauty  
 Eternally you wear.

What a wealth of bliss you fettered;  
 What happy hearts you bound;  
 What joyous hopes and blessings  
 Within two lives you wound.

You are a bygone relic,  
 A sweet and tender thing;  
 A cherished gift, an amulet—  
 An old, worn wedding ring.

Though thin and pale from wear and age  
 Your message still you bear,  
 Lettered deep inside your rim,  
 A poem and a prayer.

"Mizpah," that magic word of yore,  
 The years have loved so well,  
 Will live and shine from age to age,  
 And love's sweet story tell.

TO WALLER

Beyond the trees there's a silver sea  
 And my heart holds the gold of the sun,  
 For my little pal has come back to me  
 With his riot of laughter and fun.

The breezes are having their autumn meet,  
 While the glowing leaves scamper with joy;  
 They echo the gladness far down in the street  
 Of a rollicking dear little boy.

Vacation is o'er and books, laid away,  
 Have been gathered again in a pack  
 For little brown hands to carry each day  
 Along the old beaten track.

The lessons of life and the visions they give  
 Must breathe of God's own great love,  
 For the soul of a child was created to live  
 And its heart was a gift from above.

So my prayers are winging away to the skies  
 And my hopes are singing with glee  
 For my dear little pal with the handsome eyes  
 As he dances back home to me.

### A DESECRATED FRIENDSHIP

I loved and lost you, Linda,  
 But in the niche I held  
 Within my heart to shrine you there  
 An angel I beheld.  
 I prayed and plead with this fair one  
 To bring you back to me.  
 Alas, I cannot, cried my guest,  
 Thy friend rejected thee.

I've come to give thee comfort  
 And teach the faith that heals  
 The wounds that men leave gaping  
 When envy conscience steals.  
 Earthly idols do not hold,  
 But as they fall away  
 A light appears to lead us up  
 Where love shines as the day.

Where moth and rust do not corrupt,  
 Nor thieves break through nor steal;  
 Where treasures old and new are kept,  
 Their beauties unrevealed:  
 Untarnished is the casket  
 That holds these gifts so rare,  
 Transfigured with immortal life  
 To greet and bless us there.

---

1919

## VIA TRITA VIA TUTA

*The Beaten Path Is the Safe Path*

Along the years there winds a trail  
That leads to radiant life.  
It is the trail the Master blazed  
Through thorns and blood and strife.  
It holds a Wilderness of gloom,  
Gethsemane's sorrow and pain,  
Calvary's cross—the angry mob,  
Peter and Judas again,  
Mary's and Magdalene's grief and loss,  
The hate of a world of sin  
Too hardened to see the light ahead  
And the Christ who enters in,  
To the fullness of a perfect life  
He won for the thief at His side  
And pleads to bestow on you and me  
At this glorious Eastertide.

---

1922

TO H. B. S.

*"And a little child shall lead them."*

A tiny flower much too pure  
For earthly soil and air  
Was lifted by God's angels  
Where all is bright and fair.

The memory of her little life  
Is like an incense sweet,  
Which wafts its perfume down the years,  
Our weary souls to greet.

A baby's arms from Heaven,  
Stretched down along the way,  
Will lead the Pilgrim to the Heights  
To watch and fast and pray.

A baby's dimpled footsteps,  
So innocent and light,  
Shall lead us up above the stars,  
Beyond the shades of night.

A baby's heart, so clean and true,  
Shall keep us strong and brave;  
A baby's soul so blameless  
Our own shall help to save.

1921



### NOT DEAD BUT SLEEPING

She is sleeping 'neath the roses  
 In the land she loved so well,  
 And in Heaven the angels smiling,  
 With raptured voices tell  
 Of a soul whose cares are lifted;  
 Of a life whose work is done;  
 Of a spirit which has drifted  
 Out beyond the setting sun.

She is resting by a daisy bed,  
 Where Southern breezes play;  
 Where flowers bud and bloom and shed  
 Their sweetness all the day;  
 Where birds of beauty sing and dwell—  
 The ones she loved to hear—  
 Their feathered throats with music swell;  
 They ever hover near.

Little vanished hands held out  
 To her these long, long years  
 Are clasping hers in beautiful sleep  
 That wakes to know no tears.  
 Around her in their dreamless rest  
 Lie others missed so long;  
 With them in the silent spirit world  
 She has joined the saintly throng.

---

1908

A SABBATH SUNSET  
IN ADVENT

A flaming radiance loosed by God  
 When a day of rest was done:  
 The wonder, power, beauty, love  
     Revealed in the setting sun.  
 No brush nor pen could paint the scene,  
     The brilliance and the light,  
 An oriflamme of Mary's gift—  
     The Christ Child in the night.

The aftermath and the peace that broods  
     O'er the soul when twilight brings  
 Thoughts and prayers that glow and gleam  
     With the flutter of angels' wings,  
 The prelude to those songs of praise  
     Rising that Christmas morn,  
 Proclaiming to the sons of men  
     That Jesus Christ was born.

---

1921

## 'T WAS EVER THUS

Pursuing the Queen of his choice to a Knight  
Means winning the maid for his wife.  
Being pursued by her Knight is joy to a maid  
And illumines the pathway of life.  
It is one of High Heaven's immutable laws,  
A perfect and beautiful plan;  
But when it is altered, twisted, reversed,  
It lowers the woman and man.  
"For as unto the bow the arrow"  
So is unto man, his mate—  
He compelling; she resisting.  
God speaks through them—it is fate.

---

1922

DORMANT, NOT EXTINCT

An impudent nose and glorious hair;  
A scarlet mouth with a dimple there;  
Brows and eyes where pure thoughts shine  
Bewitching men's senses like rare old wine;  
Patrician white hands and small, shapely feet;  
Ways that are winning modest and sweet;  
Wisdom and sense; a straight, slender form;  
A vision—an ideal of real girlish charm.

---

1922

## KISSES THREE

Kisses three to my darling I give,  
And the tenderness they inspire  
Keep them as pure as an angel's song,  
Or the gleam of a vestal fire—  
The Good-bye Kiss when I say farewell,  
To answer the world's many calls;  
The Twilight Caress when the shadows tell  
I'm hastening back home to my love.

Then under a rose-covered gateway,  
Or treading a moonlighted lea;  
Or perhaps in a hammock just swinging;  
Or maybe she's smiling at me;  
When I feel surging up in my being  
A love so mighty and deep  
I pray God to ever be worthy  
Such affection to cherish and keep.

The clasp of her hand is a solace;  
The tone of her voice is a song;  
The glow in her eyes is a poem  
Where silent thoughts linger and throng;  
And when all this womanly sweetness  
Bestows her rare graces on me  
There's a splendor of light in the kiss that I win  
Ne'er seen on land or sea.

# SOME WEDDING TOASTS

(To the Bride)

To the sweet, quaint bride-elect I drink,  
And may the strongest, loveliest link  
That binds her heart to another's tight  
Be the circle she wears on her wedding night.

God bless and keep you what you are  
So sweet, so fine, so true;  
May you ever be the guiding star  
Of the life that's dear to you.

Here's to a pretty girl,  
Here's to a priceless pearl,  
Here's to her future life,  
Here's to God's sunshine,  
Here's to the marriage lines,  
Here's to a rare, sweet wife.

(To the Groom)

May fate deal with you always  
As she did some years ago,  
When she kindly marked you as the man  
Whose answer was not "No."

Here's to the love of a brother,  
Here's to the love of a son,  
Here's to the love of a lover,  
And here's to the three in one.

I drink to a dear little home nest,  
And the joy it soon will know;  
I drink to the fellow who owns it—  
A big brave gallant beau.

TO MOTHERS

*To F. L. S.*

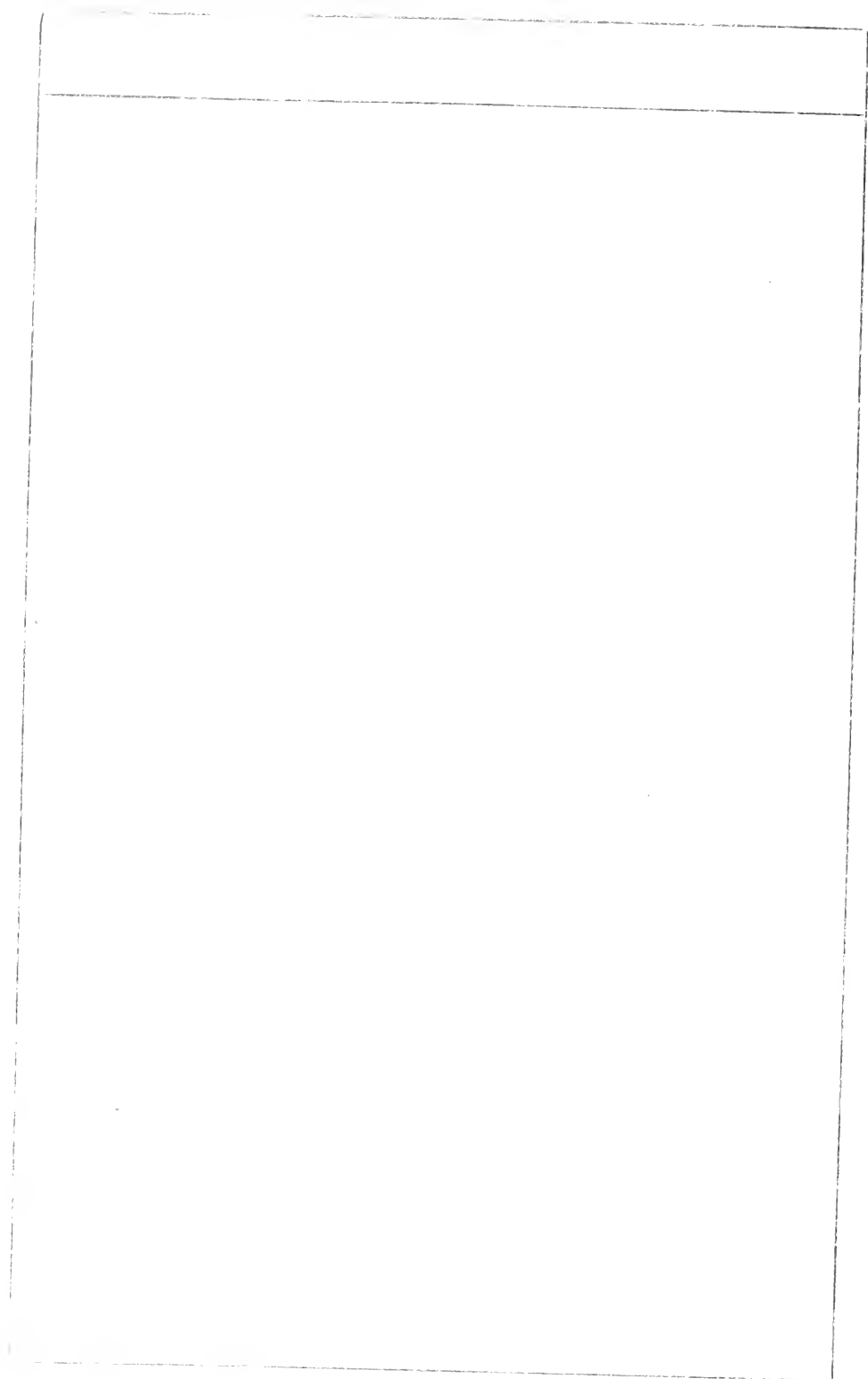
There's a beautiful sea of mystery  
 That is never sailed by men;  
 It's a sea by the heights of Motherhood  
 And it lies beyond their ken.

Its ships are manned with angels  
 Whose smiles of courage keep  
 A host of Mothers safe above  
 Its waters swift and deep.

These angels are the pilots,  
 And the precious freight that lands  
 Upon those shores where life meets death  
 Is lifted in their hands.

Sometimes a little life is lost  
 And sometimes, sadder still,  
 The Mother Soul drifts out and leaves  
 A void that none can fill.

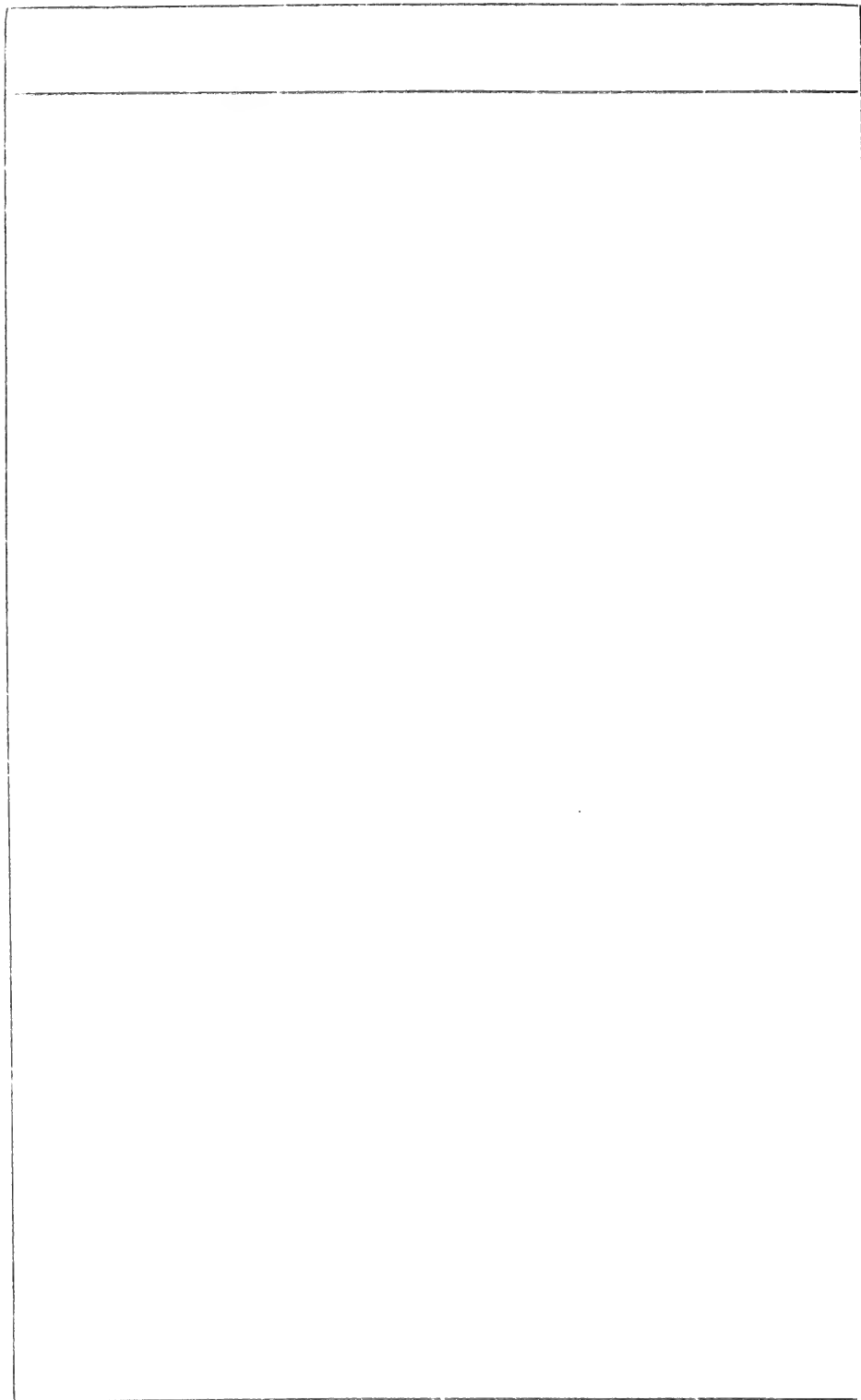
Yet legions of these travellers  
 Who sail this sparkling sea  
 Reach port with hearts and eyes aglow  
 And songs of victory.





## TALES THAT HUMOR TELLS

*Tales That Humor Tells may be  
Tales on you as well as me;  
So don't feel sad if here you see  
One on you instead of me.*



### ONE WAY BACK TO EDEN

This world might be a pretty good place  
 To live in and have a soft berth,  
 If Adam and Eve had taken "pot luck"  
 At that first meal they had upon earth.  
 Eve must have been setting the table,  
 And waiting for Adam to see  
 The figs and grapes she had fixed on some leaves  
 When Satan hopped out of the tree,  
 And showed her those pretty red apples  
 With wicked and fiendish glee;  
 Offering to give her a big juicy bite  
 If she'd only buy one for her mate;  
 When forgetting herself and the tree it hung from  
 She bought their dessert and they ate.

So together they fell and together they roam  
 Through a world of suspicion and doubt;  
 And there's only one way to the Paradise Gate  
 From which they were both driven out.  
 It lies "Over There" in the spirit land,  
 Where nothing is sold or bought;  
 Where dollars and cents have never been;  
 Where envy and greed have not fought;  
 Where silver and gold are free as air.  
 And all men are equal and blest;  
 Where our cares and our woes all fall away  
 And we lay down our burdens and rest.

1922

TO A "WILDCAT"

There was a "Doc" in our town,  
 And he was wondrous wise;  
 He never told you what you had,  
 Nor listened to your sighs,  
 He let you talk your fool head off,  
 And then he'd calmly say:  
 "Don't do this, and don't eat that,  
 And rest three hours each day."

His office was a roosting place  
 For every kind of "nut."  
 They took his powders, ate his pills,  
 And liked the cross old "Mutt."  
 Sometimes he got so red and mad,  
 He almost tore his hair,  
 And human nature then beheld  
 A wildeat in his lair.

To old folks he was tender,  
 And with children he was dear,  
 But on the squealing, idle sort  
 He practiced with a leer.  
 Yet he was busy all the time,  
 And couldn't get away  
 To take a rest just once a year  
 And have a holiday.

He was a bright and clever chap;  
 He joked away one's fears;  
 He bossed and ordered folks around,  
 And laughed at silly tears.  
 Once in awhile he was real nice,  
 And sympathetic, too,  
 With aches and pains, and even "nerves"  
 His patients' wonder grew.

And while you wondered much about  
 His methods rare and queer,  
 This paradox was teaching you  
 To help yourself, my dear.  
 A courage must be fine and strong  
 That dares to act a part,  
 That others may win out and hope;  
 Look up and make a start.

The knife did not appeal to him  
 Unless the case was grave,  
 And nothing else was quick enough  
 An ebbing life to save.  
 His name will be emblazoned  
 Down the ages, I'm quite sure,  
 As one whose school of discipline  
 Recorded many a cure.

1921

A VALENTINE THAT MISSED THE MAIL

I sing a song of a newspaper gang,  
A gang that's hard to beat;  
They rant and snort and fuss and fight,  
But somehow fall on their feet.

There's Lynn and Potts, Hess and Jones,  
Bosses of different types;  
Each thinks he's "It," so don't wake them up  
From those dreams curling out of their pipes.

"Doe" Freeman is a wonder man,  
With a rich and marvellous mind;  
His knowledge is unlimited  
Of every sort and kind.

There's "Cally" with the fertile brain  
And caustic pen. Oh, Son!  
Here's hoping you are not the boob  
At whom she's poking fun.

Among the upstairs union bunch  
Are many loyal guys,  
And some are good and clever,  
With open minds and eyes.

Slaughter is a wizard  
 With wonderful speed and skill,  
 And Mac is a man with the kind of a job  
 That only a man can fill.

Jesse and Walter are good old scouts,  
 And Giles is a smiling chap;  
 The three are pals and they form a squad  
 Who for camouflage don't care a rap.

There are numerous others in this gang,  
 Whose names I can't recall,  
 But ere I lay my pen aside,  
 One more I would extol.

He is the modest, brilliant chief  
 Of all this motley crew—  
 A Christian and a diplomat—  
 A person real and true.

Contented to play fair and straight  
 The game of life with men,  
 John Stewart—leader, prince and chief  
 Of all your tribe and ken.

—  
 1921

# JOURNALISM

David was a clever scribe  
 And so was Edmund, too;  
 But David had the kopecks,  
 And Edmund not a son;  
 So all the brains that Edmund had  
 Dave thought he'd like to hire,  
 Provided Edmund would agree  
 To let him pull the wire.

So Edmund said: Alright, Old Top,  
 Gadsooks, I'll let them go;  
 For what are brains without some coin  
 I'd really like to know?  
 I'll write your views and spill my words;  
 Money's what I'm after;  
 News is what the public wants;  
 Genius is my grafter.  
 Ideals won't buy auto cars;  
 Visions are gold bricks;  
 Unless I hustle while I dream  
 I'll never take odd tricks.

Facts and jokes, truths and lies,  
 Politics, science, creeds  
 Mingle and mould the minds of men;  
 Prompt their words and deeds.  
 And when we live in a world like this  
 Where nothing talks like cash,  
 A poor guy sells most anything  
 To cut his little dash.

—  
 1921



SUMMER, 1921

I'm crazy mit the heat, I am;  
 I'll say I am, Old Sun,  
 So take your rays some seven ways  
 And let us have some fun.

For three months you've been on the job,  
 And each day has been hotter,  
 Till I'm disposed to think, Old Slob,  
 You're just a huge "self starter."

Your hot old face is quite a bore;  
 Your blistering glare is bold;  
 I'd like to see it rain a month,  
 Then—blessed thought—turn cold.

You've scorched and burnt, fried and stewed  
 All nature's garb so green.  
 Men's brains and thoughts you've melted  
 red—  
 Such nerve has ne'er been seen.

Get up behind the clouds, Old Blast,  
 And give the winds a show.  
 The autumn gales are on the way,  
 And I'm darned glad it's so.

—  
 1921

# THE GAME OF LIFE

Said a Saint to a Sinner I'll give you a tip  
 In the game of Life that we play;  
 While you bid on the Hearts that you hold in your  
     grip,  
 I win with No Trumps every day.

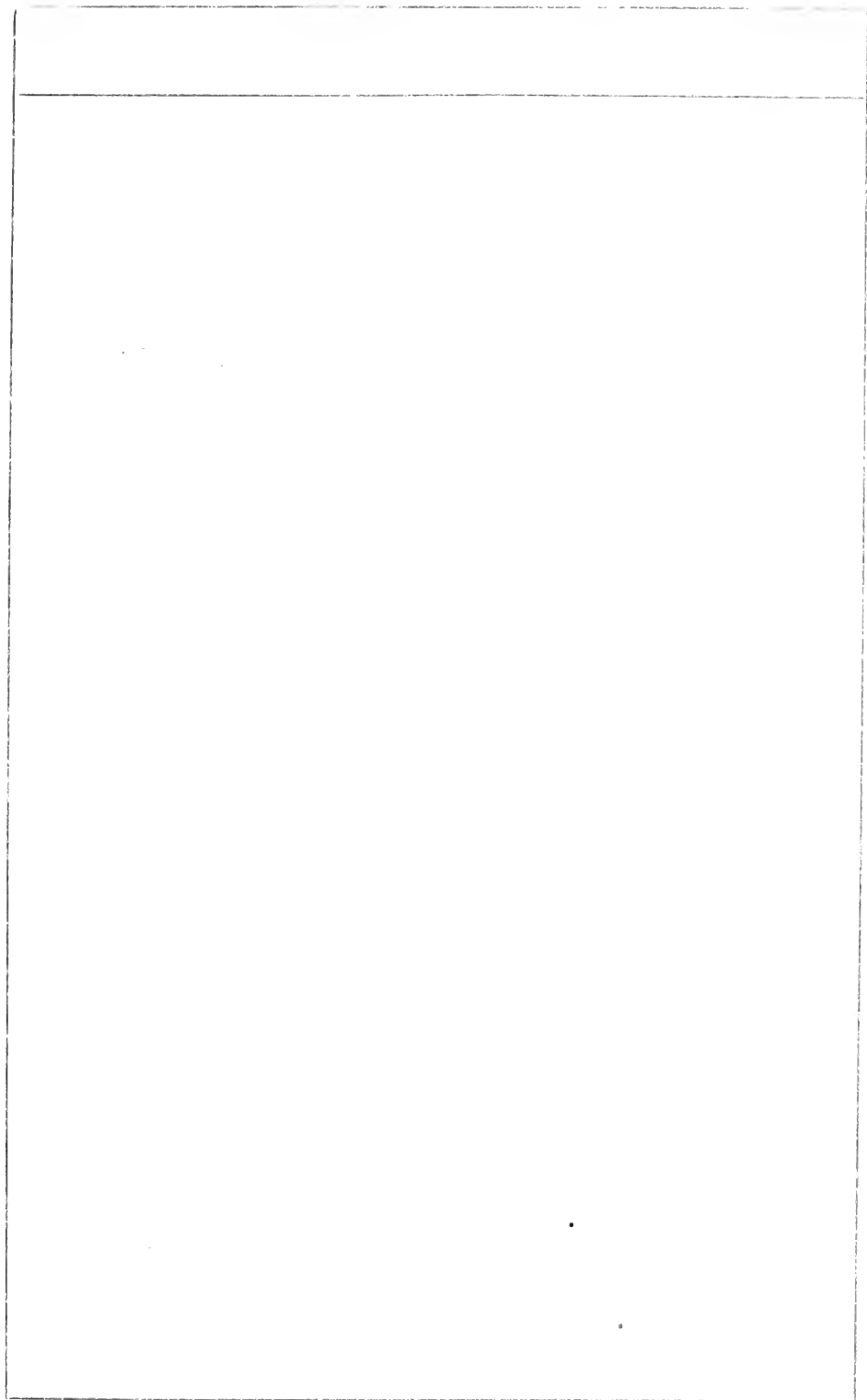
You stack the deck with cheat and bluff,  
 And steal your tricks with a lie,  
 But in the end my Honor Score  
 Counts up with Aces high.

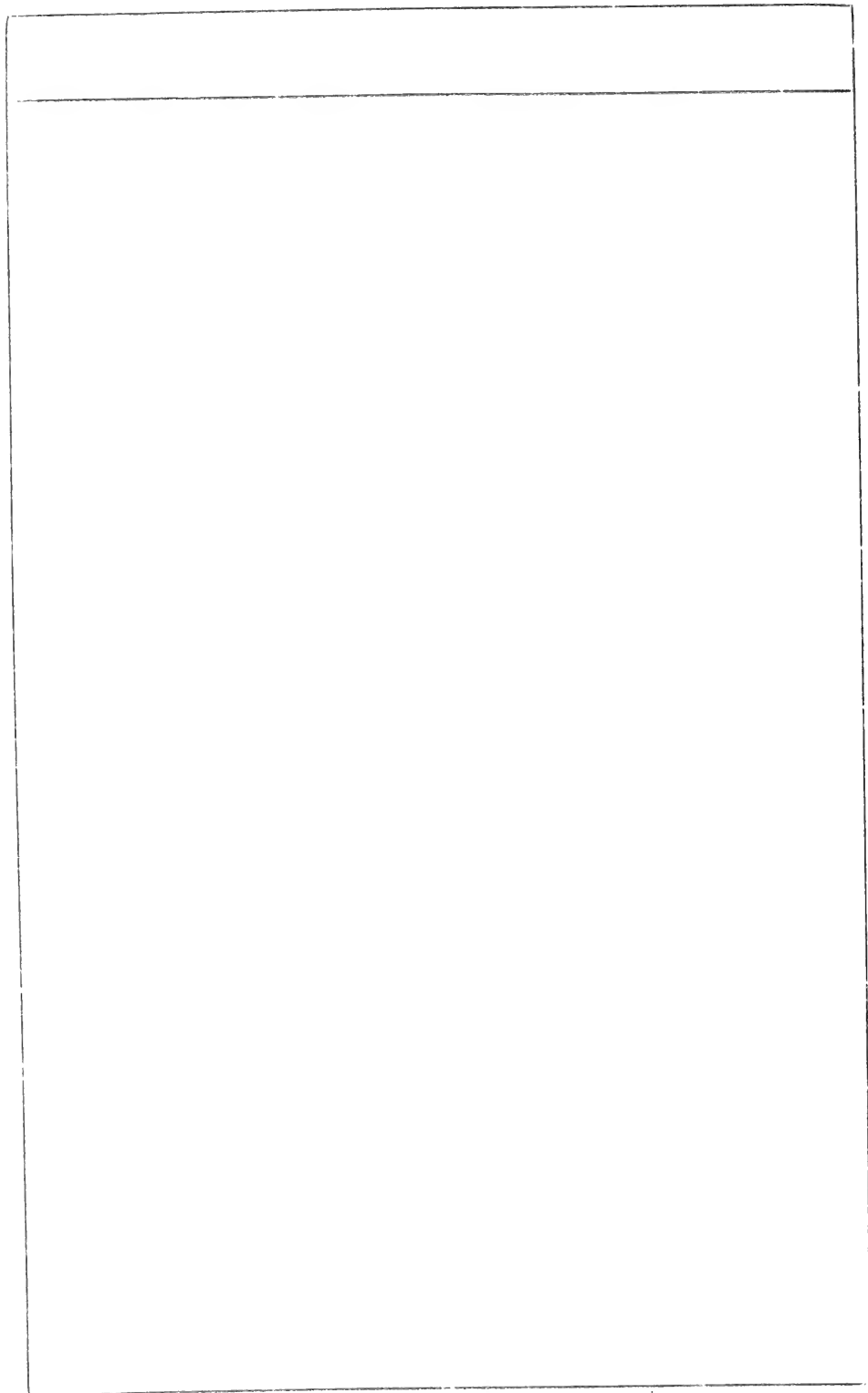
Your fussy partner, Money-Mad Greed,  
 Deals with deceit and stealth,  
 Forgetting the fact that methods like these  
 Are signals of failure and death.

The first prize, Virtue, is always mine;  
 The second, Contentment, I get;  
 But the "booby" you draw, and it's labeled  
     "Despair"—  
 You take it with groans of regret.

So in this game of Life, "Old Boy,"  
 You are a sorry lout,  
 And bye-and-bye I'll wear a crown  
 When you are down and out.

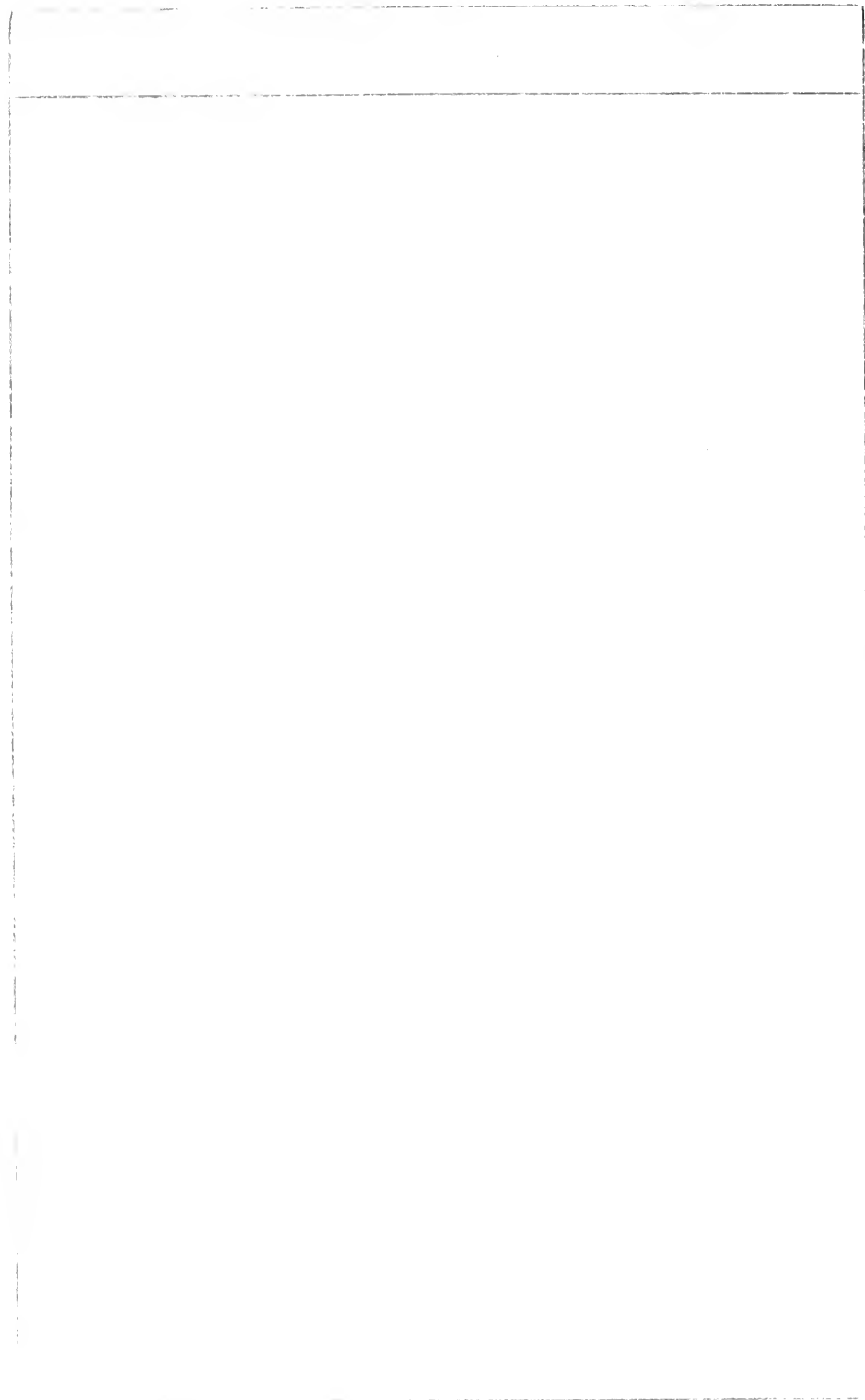
1921





## RAINBOW RAYS OF OTHER DAYS

*Rainbow Rays of Other Days  
On youthful, happy hours  
Leave golden beams across those dreams  
Reflecting memory's flowers.*



9 EAST GRACE STREET

Back over the years I trip with joy  
 To those days that are no more,  
 When my brothers and I played hide and seek  
 In a yard of the long ago.

Where today only part of the old house stands,  
 Where we first saw the light of day;  
 Where we romped through the fun of Santa Claus  
 land,  
 And rollicked with laughter and play.

Where the woman who nurtured and loved us,  
 A mother who was a saint,  
 Sat in the cool of the evening  
 In a garden lovely and quaint.

Where her spirit communed with the flowers,  
 And her influence, lofty and fine,  
 Cast a spell o'er the children she fondled,  
 Like music that echoes through time.

This old fashioned garden, secluded,  
 With specimens fragile and rare,  
 Was planted and brought to perfection  
 By one whom we called "Grandpere."

A fun-loving soul and a doctor;  
 A physician who filled every need;  
 A soldier, veteran, author;  
 A congenial companion, indeed.

A botanist, teacher and surgeon,  
 Whose bills bore the Red Cross seal;  
 Whose patients were poor and adored him;  
 Whose wealth was his power to heal.

There was ivy from Kenilworth Castle  
 In this garden of roses and vines;  
 A trellis, a picturesque bower,  
 Where the *Microphylla* clustered and twined.

A lily nook, sunken and shaded;  
 High ground, where the tulip beds lay,  
 Where jonquils and starry narcissus  
 Reflected the glory of day.

A cold frame, a basement for nurslings,  
 With steps leading down in the ground,  
 Where the Night-Blooming *Cereus* was guarded,  
 And other exotics were found.

The one I remember for beauty  
 Was exquisitely chiselled and white,  
 But a touch or a breath on its petals  
 Would injure and leave there a blight.

Cape Jasmine, odor from Edom;  
 Faultless, but where is it now?  
 Perhaps it has gone with those gardens,  
 Or just doesn't linger, somehow.

Where nothing seems natural or loving,  
 Like it did in those years long ago,  
 When trysting and romance and gardens  
 Were hallowed and hidden and slow.



### AN IDEAL

Give me a thoughtful man,  
 With a face that is honest and strong;  
 One that will fight for right,  
 And needs none to help him along;  
 One that God fashioned to be—  
 Not perfect—just a man, every inch;  
 One who never knows fear;  
 Who from duty and work does not flinch;  
 A man who, when seen in a crowd,  
 A woman instinctively knows  
 Is the one she could trust and believe  
 Through a life of joys or woes.  
 His profile is no artist's dream;  
 Conceited he could not be,  
 Yet among all the handsome men  
 In his face there is more to see.  
 But it rarely appears in this life,  
 Though once in awhile you can,  
 By watching intently discover  
 The face of a real manly man.

1900

# WHEN KNIGHTHOOD WAS IN FLOWER

First there was dear old Henry,  
 When she was sweet sixteen,  
 Just home from "The University,"  
 And as handsome as a dream;  
 They talked and danced and "had it" bad;  
 He made the sweetest lover,  
 But she, alas, could not right then  
 The answering spark discover.  
 Of course dear Henry soon found out  
 That there were maids galore,  
 And straightway bowed at other shrines;  
 Oh, but her heart was sore;  
 Not long, though, for a soldier boy  
 Soon stole it right away;  
 He was the finest, noblest lad,  
 In V. M. I. array.

Brass buttons, a buckle, letters sweet,  
 Preserved with girlish care,  
 Were happy, cherished relics  
 Of this second love affair.  
 A summons home, a broken date  
 The night they planned to meet,  
 A misunderstanding—then a break—  
 And love made a quick retreat.  
 In after years he made a plea  
 For the love that might have been.  
 Too late, though, for another then  
 Right boldly had stepped in;  
 He was an athletic man,  
 With shoulders big and grand;  
 He rushed and wooed her gallantly,  
 And almost won her hand.

A ring, a locket and other gifts;  
 Love letters by the score,  
 And every day a little girl  
 Learned to love him more.  
 For two brief happy, golden years  
 The course of love ran smooth;  
 Then pride stepped in and parted wide  
 Their lives for aye forsooth,  
 Of minor loves and friends and beaux  
 There were right many, too—  
 One Tom, two Franks, Charles, Bob and Jim  
 And, oh, yes, one named Hu—  
 She liked them all, and likes to think,  
 Now that they're far apart,  
 That each one keeps a thought for her  
 Down somewhere in his heart.

The last Prince Charming to appear  
 Is gentle, brave and kind;  
 Considerate, good with winning ways,  
 And broad, well-balanced mind.  
 He may win out, and if he does  
 I'll tell you why 'twill be—  
 Because he's never loved before.  
 And she?—well, only three.

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

In boyhood's golden past  
 I loved you alone, sweetheart.  
 My heart was yours to keep and claim  
 From all the world apart.  
 No other face smiled in my dreams  
 But yours in the old sweet way;  
 No soul was one in thought with mine;  
 No voice or tone so gay—  
 But that was Yesterday.  
 And this is Today.

We talked of love and life  
 Together, just you and I,  
 As we sat in the misty light  
 That flooded the summer sky,  
 Sometimes we were silent, little one,  
 But your hand was in my own,  
 And I felt a thrill of holy love  
 Till then I ne'er had known—  
 But that was Yesterday.  
 And this is Today.

We were happy apart from the crowd,  
 And you never sought to conceal  
 Your love for me from others,  
 And you never seemed to feel  
 Any lack of admiration  
 From those who would fain have been  
 Attentive to you, my darling,  
 Had they thought you were free to win—  
 But that was Yesterday,  
 And this is Today.

Well, we cannot alter fate,  
 Nor keep the past always;  
 Destiny weaves a thread  
 That saddens those bygone days,  
 When faith and love and joy,  
 Fostered by innocent youth,  
 Know no sorrow nor care,  
 When all is beauty and truth—  
 When all our Yesterdays  
 Hallow Today.

You and I do not forget  
 That boy and girl affair,  
 Though now you talk to men galore,  
 With a charming naivete air;  
 You don't avoid the noise and rush  
 Of a crowded ballroom floor;  
 You divide one waltz into three parts,  
 And find no man a bore.

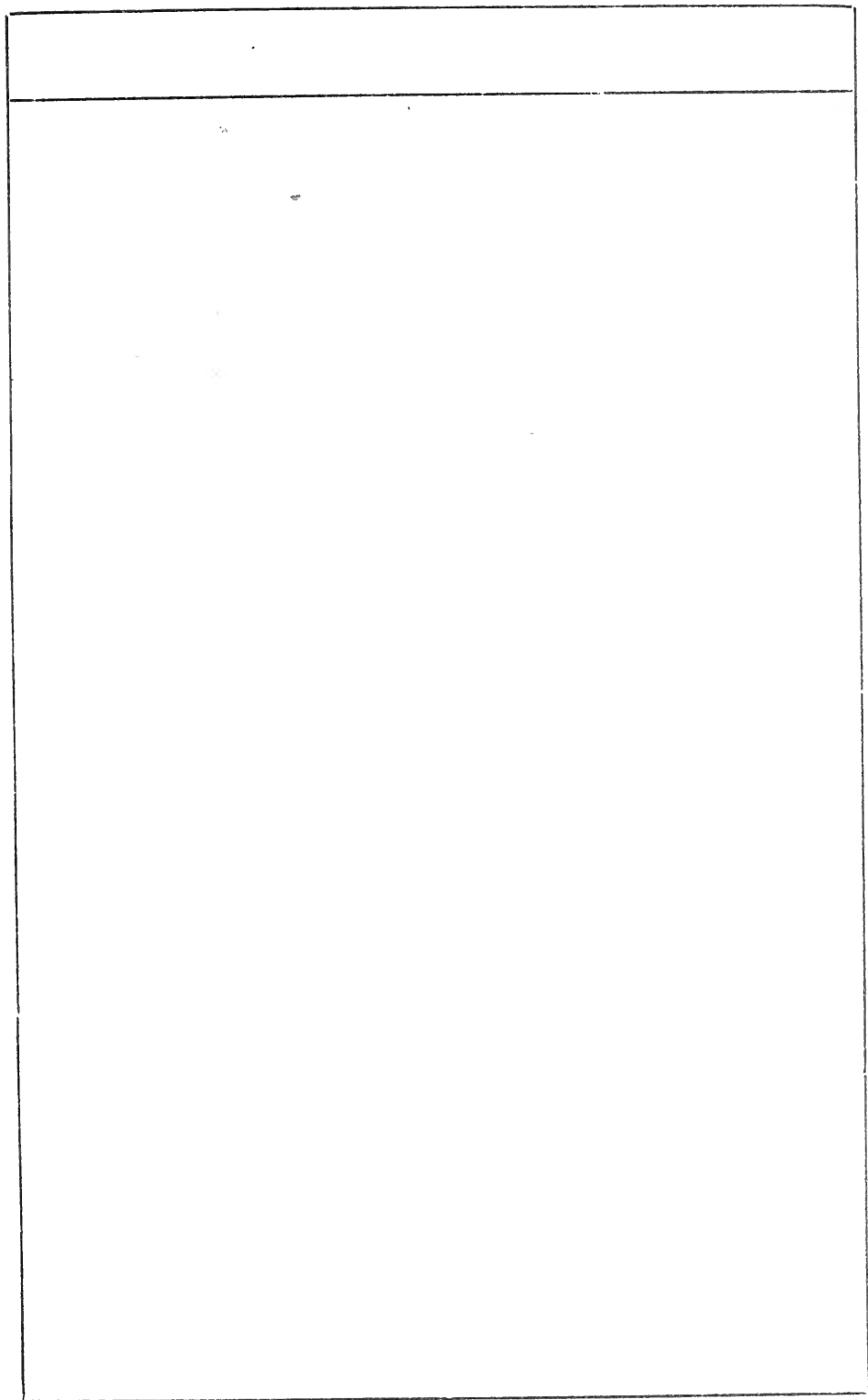
I, too, am fond of society;  
 I am called a blase man;  
 I jolly the young girls a little,  
 And the old folks think I am grand;  
 I fit in the place I am wanted;  
 I enjoy life as a whole.  
 At night—alone with my pipe—  
 The rest of my story is told—  
 For the love of Yesterday  
 Haunts me Today.

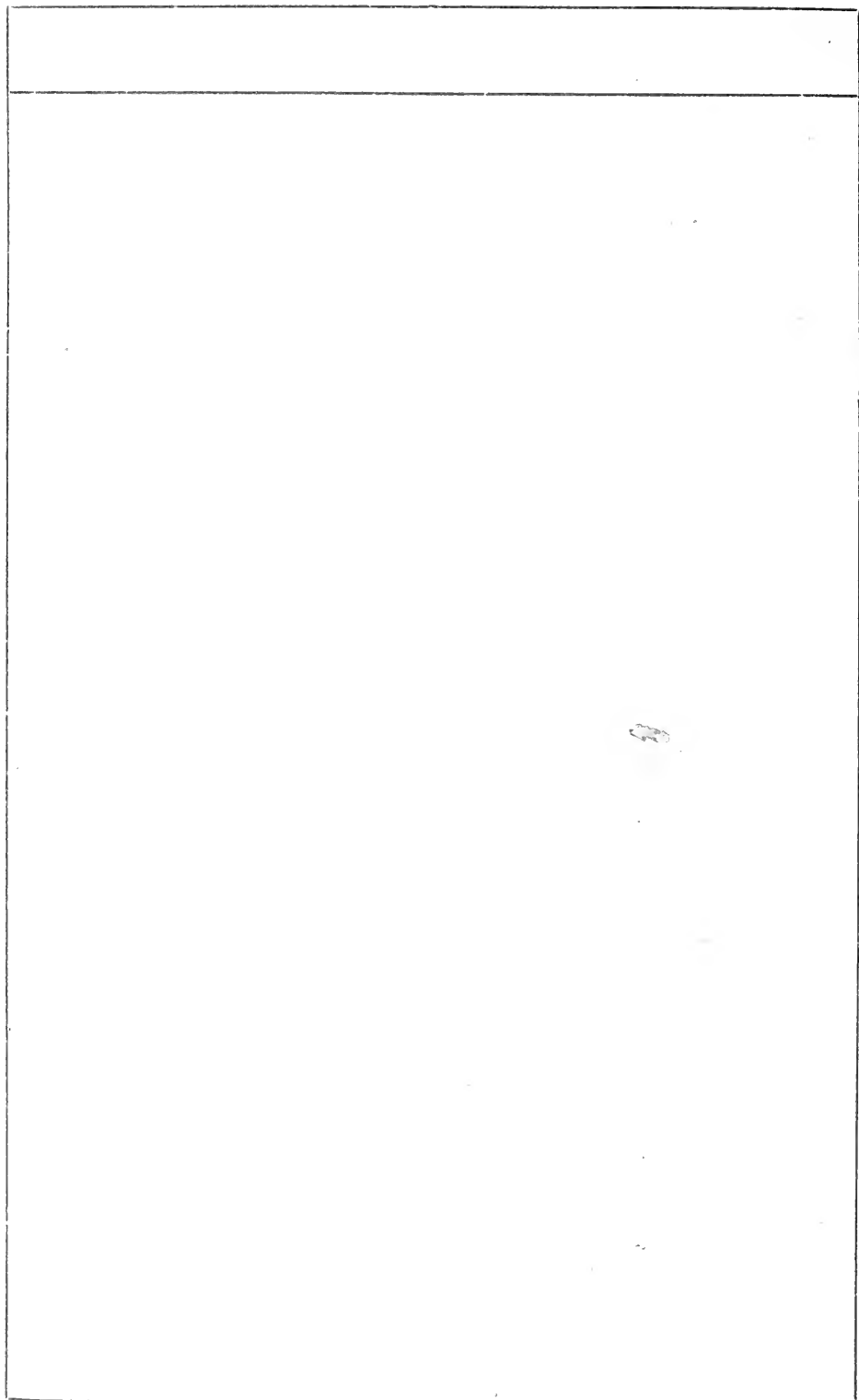
A BIRTHDAY RHYME

Many bright and happy returns  
 Of this day for you, I pray;  
 Many joys and blessings, dearest  
 To sweeten the hard, rough way;  
 God's richest, choicest gifts surround  
 Your life in flowing measure;  
 May happiness and love abound  
 To give to you their treasure;  
 I also ask for you beloved,  
 The strength that makes the soul;  
 The sweetness of a pure, true heart;  
 The peace and grace untold,  
 That only Heaven itself can send,  
 When shadows cloud the way.  
 Good angels guard and keep you  
 Forever and—Today.

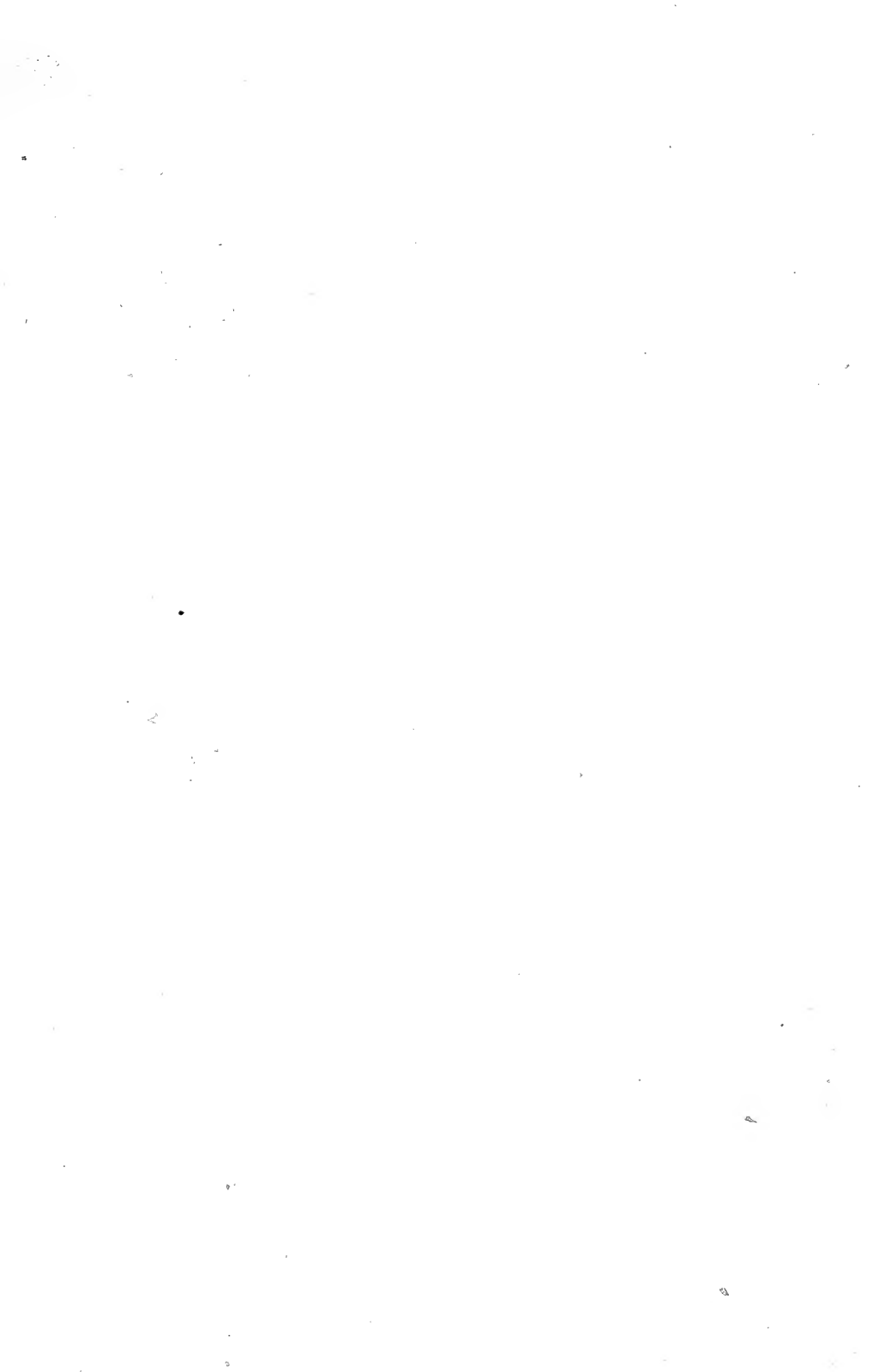
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